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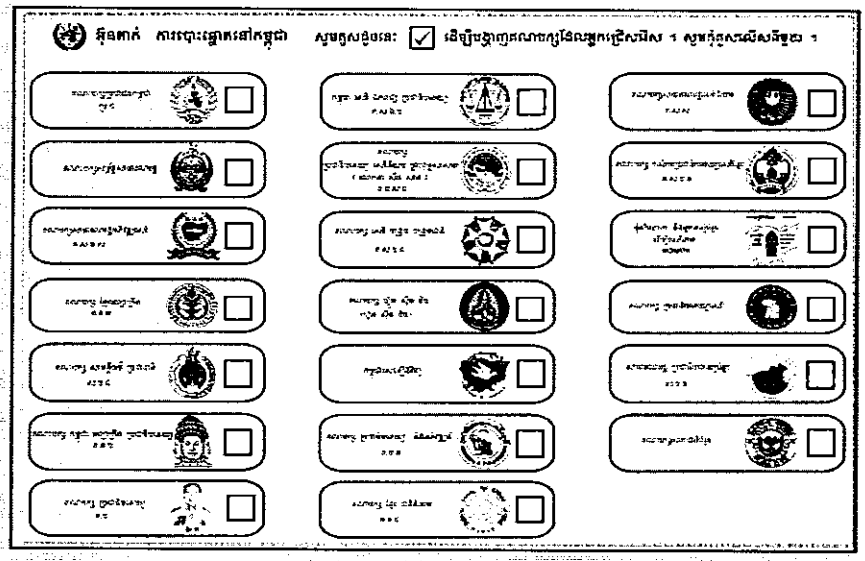
FROM BULLETS TO BALLOTS

POSTWAR CAMBODIA'S STRUGGLE WITH DEMOCRACY

ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE TO POSTCONFLICT SOCIETIES



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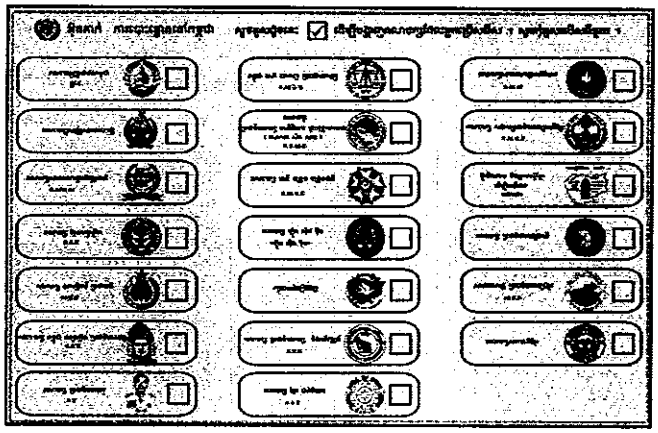

Postwar Cambodia's Struggle With Democracy

In May 1993, under a firm UN presence, this tortured Asian land held the first 'free and fair' elections in its history. But Cambodia had no experience in political toleration or compromise; politics has always been seen as a zero-sum game. Now, just four years after those first tentative steps, the country appears to be stumbling, with no clear view to the future.

Photograph of Cambodian ballot courtesy of International Foundation for Election Systems.

A LEGACY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TURMOIL

An estimated one to two million Cambodians died during the Khmer Rouge period (April 1975–December 1978) from execution, starvation, or disease. Before the killing, the population had stood at about seven million. In 1996, Cambodia's population, estimated at somewhat more than 10 million, was growing at a rate of about 3 percent a year. As a result of internal armed conflict since the 1960s, the population is at least

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55 percent female, and rural households are headed predominantly by females. By 1995 the mean age was believed to be one of the youngest in Asia, owing to the birth explosion after the Khmer Rouge were expelled at the end of 1978.

In 1962, 80 percent of the population were ethnic Khmer. The remaining 20 percent included Chinese, Vietnamese, Cham (an Islamic minority originating in Vietnam), and Khmer Loeu (tribal people of the highlands). By 1981, as a result of a Vietnamese exodus and the Khmer Rouge execution of large numbers of Cham and Chinese, ethnic Khmer accounted for about 90 percent of the population. With the return of former Vietnamese residents and new "settlers" during 1981–91, and after a 1993 boost in the Cambodian economy, the informal Vietnamese population may now constitute 5 percent of the population. The presence of ethnic Vietnamese farmers in the eastern provinces and construction workers in Phnom Penh is one of most sensitive political issues in contemporary Cambodia. Population density (150 per square mile) is sparse compared with that of Vietnam (544) or Thailand (287). Despite an agglomeration around Phnom Penh since the 1980s, Cambodia remains overwhelmingly an agrarian society, with 80 percent of the population living in villages and small towns.

Cambodia's fundamental problems are rooted in geography and in centuries of national and ethnic rivalry between Cambodians, Thais, Vietnamese, and Chinese. From the 9th through the 14th centuries, the Khmer Empire fought the Siamese, the Cham, and then the Vietnamese to preserve its dominance. Then it collapsed. For three centuries Cambodia was picked apart by its neighbors until becoming a French colony in the mid-19th century.

The Cold War became critical soon after the country's independence from France in 1955. Prince Norodom Sihanouk maneuvered Cambodia through the Indochina Wars of the 1950s and 1960s with minimum damage compared with the disasters

that befell Vietnam and Laos. By 1970 the country's fragile neutrality was undermined by a widening Indochina war. In March 1970, Sihanouk was deposed. The radical communist Khmer Rouge, then allied with North Vietnam, had solidified their grip on the countryside during the early 1970s. In 1975 they wrenched power from the U.S.–backed Lon Nol government.

The Khmer Rouge surpassed in scope the visions of the bloodiest of Maoist revolutionaries. Their rule lasted 42 months and caused the deaths of one fifth of Cambodia's seven million people. To construct a "pure" Cambodian communism, the Khmer Rouge pursued a virulent anti-intellectual, anti-urban campaign. They executed or worked to death doctors, lawyers, merchants. Reports circulated of their dispatching, indiscriminately, anyone who wore (or appeared to have worn) eyeglasses—a possible indication of higher education.

Bent on stamping out any vestiges of Vietnamese influence, the Khmer Rouge slaughtered more than 5,000 Khmer communist cadres trained by Hanoi. The Khmer Rouge were determined to regain lands of the ancient Khmer Empire absorbed by the Vietnamese in the 17th and 18th centuries. Beginning in 1976, they staged cross-border raids, ravaging Vietnamese settlements in the Mekong Delta.

In December, Vietnam invaded Cambodia. The political vehicle for Vietnam's "liberation" of Cambodia was a "united front" made up of ethnic Cambodians living in South Vietnam, Vietnamese who had previously lived in Cambodia, and disaffected Khmer Rouge and other native Cambodians who had fled across the border into Vietnam to escape KR rule. Vietnam had organized, trained, and equipped the front for this contingency. The invasion removed the Khmer Rouge government and installed the People's Republic of Kampuchea, ushering in a new era in Indochina.

For the rest of Southeast Asia, the cause of the ensuing conflict was "irreversibility"—Vietnam's announced objective to create in Phnom Penh a regime that was Marxist–Leninist and responsive to Vietnam's political will. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and its international supporters refused to accept this *fait accompli*.

Asean encouraged two Cambodian factions exiled in eastern Thailand: the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and the Unified National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (Funcinpec). In 1979 they were joined by the Khmer Rouge, who remained steadfastly communist. The KPNLF was republican; Funcinpec was monarchist and loyal to Prince Sihanouk. From safe havens within Thailand and later in "liberated zones" inside Cambodia, these groups organized miniature armies that conducted a guerilla insurgency against the People's Republic and the occupying Vietnamese army. The Khmer Rouge dominated this coalition, which was formalized in 1982 as the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. The coalition enjoyed support from Asean, China, and the United States. As the anti–Phnom Penh insurgency grew, Cambodia

The Khmer Rouge rule lasted 42 months and caused the deaths of one fifth of Cambodia's seven million people.

became simultaneously a civil war, a regional war, and a great-power proxy war.

Politically, between the two communist factions (the deposed Khmer Rouge and the ruling Phnom Penh regime, backed by Vietnam) there was mortal enmity that became a major obstacle to resolution of the Cambodian conflict after 1979. Similarly, because of the outcome of the war in 1975, which had either forced them to flee or to endure the depredations of the Khmer Rouge, the noncommunist Cambodian resistance movement hated both the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh regime, which was staffed largely by ex–Khmer Rouge.

Many in the large Cambodian peasantry were more prepared to make peace than were their political leaders.

Most Cambodians felt a deep hostility toward one or more of these principle actors responsible for Cambodia's plight. Nonetheless, given the society's Buddhist culture, which stresses a spirit of forgiveness, many in the large Cambodian peasantry were more prepared to make peace than were their political leaders. But in the pre-1991 era—and to the present day—the elites' basic recalcitrance and hunger for power have made national reconciliation extremely difficult.

All parties to the Cambodia conflict had at one time or another embraced the concept of an international solution. These rhetorical pledges were customarily made to gain tactical political advantage. As the first Paris International Conference on Cambodia was opening in midsummer 1989, the Berlin Wall fell and communism began to unravel in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Bloc had been the main contributor to Vietnam's military capability and economic development and to the life-support system of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (renamed, in 1989, the State of Cambodia). In the context of a potential Cambodia settlement, the collapse of Eurocommunism had discernable implications. Moscow and Beijing modified their geopolitical priorities to downgrade the Cambodia issue. With accomplishment of their strategic objectives in sight, China, the United States, and Asean were ready to talk seriously about compromise. China, still smarting from the international outcry against Tiananmen Square, was seeking to normalize relations with the Soviet Union and several states in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia and Vietnam. Vietnam, nearly bankrupt and with domestic discontent mounting, was desperately attempting to promote normalization with China and the United States.

The Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict were signed in Paris on October 23, 1991. The Khmer parties were swept along on the tide of the determination of the external powers—for their own political reasons—to remove the Cambodia conflict from center stage. Some of the issues thought to be critical before 1991 were obscured in late 1991. External events preoccupied the main players in the Cambodian peace process as momentum toward a political settlement mounted.

But the issues were not forgotten by the Cambodians. They returned to center stage with a vengeance in 1991–93, especially during preparations for the May 1993 elections. The viability of the settlement was predicated on parties' obeying both the spirit and the letter of the settlement.

The Cambodian factions, however, too accustomed to having others fight their internecine battles, were never fully committed to the Paris Agreements. The permanent five members of the Security Council (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China) did not choose to give the agreements the teeth necessary to force compliance.

INTERNATIONAL ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

The Paris Agreements established the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and armed it with the mandate set forth in the agreements. Yasushi Akashi, a former Japanese diplomat with extensive experience at the UN's New York headquarters, was appointed special representative to the UN secretary general to oversee UNTAC.

The agreements stipulated that a Supreme National Council would be "the unique legitimate body and source of authority in which, throughout the transitional period, the sovereignty, independence, and unity of Cambodia are enshrined." The council consisted of 12 members, 6 from the incumbent Cambodian People's Party (CPP), which had been installed by the Vietnamese as the governing party to replace the Khmer Rouge, and 2 from each of the 3 resistance factions. The council was chaired by Prince Sihanouk, as a 13th member empowered to break deadlocks. When he was unwilling or unable to do so, this authority passed to the UN special representative.

The council delegated to the United Nations "all powers necessary" to ensure implementation of the agreements. UNTAC followed some of the conventional guidelines of previous UN peacekeeping operations yet possessed a number of unique characteristics, in particular the nature of the Supreme National Council's powerful role. The national sovereignty of Cambodia was ceded temporarily to the United Nations through the mechanism of the council. UNTAC incorporated the traditional goals of monitoring cease-fire agreements and adherence to border arrangements to prevent further conflict and to promote permanent dispute resolution.

To ensure a neutral political environment, UNTAC was supposed to exercise direct supervision over all "existing administrative structures" acting in the fields of finance, information, foreign affairs, national defense, and public security. This was the most difficult civil mandate to carry out and the one in which the framers of the Paris Agreements had been most negligent in addressing realistically.

UNTAC was empowered to exercise a lesser degree of scrutiny over other components of the existing administrative structures; the criterion was whether such offices could have any influence on the outcome of the elections. In theory, UNTAC's operations were designed to unfold in a series of four phases after October 1991: preparatory (through May 1992), cantonment and demobilization (June–September 1992), electoral process (October 1992–April 1993), and postelection (May–October 1993).

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When fully deployed in September 1992, 11 months after the signing of the Paris Agreements, UNTAC's strength was 15,900 military personnel, 3,600 civilian policemen, and 2,500 international civilian personnel. Tens of thousands of locally recruited Cambodian staff were trained and worked with UNTAC international staff. The majority were involved in the electoral process. UNTAC consisted of seven components: military, electoral, human rights, civil administration, civilian police, repatriation, and rehabilitation. In addition it had an information and education division, which reported directly to the special representative and which came to enjoy equivalent status with that of the components.

Khmer Rouge refusal to cooperate in the peace process began early in 1992.

The military component was charged with verification of the withdrawal from Cambodia and nonreturn of all categories of foreign forces and their arms and equipment. It supervised the cease-fire and related measures, including regroupment, cantonment, and disarmament and demobilization of forces of the Cambodian parties. It was also responsible for monitoring the cessation of outside military assistance, locating and confiscating caches of weapons and military supplies throughout Cambodia, storing the arms and equipment of the cantoned and the demobilized military forces, and conducting mine clearance and mine awareness training programs. The military's overall objectives were to "stabilize the security situation and build confidence among the parties to the conflict."

The agreements entrusted UNTAC with the organization and conduct of free, fair, and credible general elections—the essential element of the UN involvement on the ground. Among UNTAC's responsibilities were establishing an electoral law, regulations to govern the electoral process, and an electoral code of conduct. The key operational aspects of the electoral component's responsibilities were registration of voters and political parties, civic education and training, compliance and complaints, and the polling and vote-counting process itself. It was given responsibility for "fostering an environment in which respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms would be ensured."

The human rights component provided human rights education, general human rights oversight in all "existing administrative structures," and investigation of alleged human rights abuses.

ELECTIONS IN A TIME OF POISONOUS POLITICS

Khmer Rouge refusal to cooperate in the peace process began early in 1992. The UN special representative had kept the door ajar for the Khmer Rouge's political wing, the Party of Democratic Kampuchea, to join the electoral process at the last moment even though the party had failed to cooperate in the steps prescribed under the Paris Agreements. The net result was that the Khmer Rouge, by their own actions, excluded themselves.

As the election campaign commenced in February 1993, the political and security climate was far from encouraging. There were threats and actual violence from the Khmer Rouge; harassment of noncommunist political parties by cadres of the Cambodian People's Party and the State of Cambodia; military skirmishes between the Khmer Rouge and state forces; strained relations between Thailand and UNTAC; uncertainty over Prince Sihanouk's future role; controversy over the Vietnamese presence; and doomsaying from foreign observers. UNTAC was unable to gain the cooperation of the Khmer Rouge or to curb the excesses of the Cambodian People's Party and forces of the State of Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge Party of Democratic Kampuchea confirmed rejection of the peace process with their formal departure from Phnom Penh on April 13, 1993.

Among the 20 registered parties, the strongest players who actually fielded candidates were 1) Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP), including many ex–Khmer Rouge in the state apparatus; 2) the United National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (Funcinpec), led by Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh; 3) and the former Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), which had split into two parties: the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), led by Son Sann, and the Liberal Democratic Party, led by General Sak Satsakhan.

Campaign offices of the incumbent Cambodian People's Party were present in all the provinces and most villages; they were housed in existing state administrative offices. Attendance at CPP political meetings was mandatory for civil servants. Other political parties had to rent office space or use their homes; permission to open offices was often difficult to obtain from officials of the State of Cambodia.

Most political parties expressed fear of retaliation at political meetings. Their fears apparently were justified. Civilian police and other authorities received numerous complaints of political harassment by the government cadre. Funcinpec nonetheless managed to field a remarkably high number of provincial and district offices, while the BLDP was well represented in the western and northern provinces and in Phnom Penh.

Sihanouk, "father of all Khmers," remained above the fray in hopes of fabricating a national reconciliation. Throughout the UN-sponsored peace process from 1986 onward, Sihanouk had been viewed as the linchpin of a settlement, the only leader capable of managing Cambodia's poisonous politics. Many Cambodians still viewed him as the one leader who might, *deus ex machina,* impose tranquillity on the fractured Cambodian society.

True, certain of Sihanouk's traits and actions undermined his credibility as a leader. These included vacillation, contradictory statements, prolonged absences in Beijing and Pyongyang, and pledges to bring the Khmer Rouge into the new Cambodian government regardless of the election outcome. Still, most rural people retained a nostalgia for the past and equated the tranquillity and prosperity of those days to life under Sihanouk. It was a belief that aided Funcinpec immeasurably.

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None of the parties could have guaranteed peace or offered firm programs to rebuild Cambodia.

The major issue in the May 1993 elections was power, pure and simple—who would govern. In their geographically small zones of control, mainly in enclaves near the Thai border, Funcinpec and KPNLF argued that they would bring foreign investment, economic development, and "good government" to Cambodia. By contrast, CPP candidates claimed that only the Cambodian People's Party and the existing regime could offer protection against the return of the Khmer Rouge. Realistically, none of the parties could have guaranteed peace or offered firm programs to rebuild Cambodia. The election embodied three emotional negatives: anti–Khmer Rouge sentiment, anti-CPP and anti-regime sentiments, and anti-Vietnamese sentiment. There was one positive—a yearning for peace—and the United Nations' massive presence seemed to offer this chance.

Technically, the elections were among the most meticulously planned and most expensive per capita ever held in Asia. Voting took place under a system of proportional representation within 21 provinces on the basis of lists of candidates put forward by political parties in each province. Thus, any party that obtained a modest share of the popular vote in a given province was assured of seats in the National Assembly. This worked in favor of the BLDP, for example, which obtained only 3.8 percent of the vote nationwide but received 10 seats in the National Assembly out of 120 (8.3 percent). Twenty parties registered slates of candidates. The voters did not cast their ballots for individual candidates but for the party slates. Party leaders were permitted to switch candidates for their prospective seats, and when the results of the election were known (see table 1), they juggled their slates to seat their priority choices for the Assembly.

Each person 18 years old and born in Cambodia or the child of a person born in Cambodia was eligible to vote. In the August 1992 electoral law, for registration purposes the definition of a "Cambodian person" was refined so that any potential registrant who was born outside Cambodia had only to demonstrate that he or she had both a parent and a grandparent of the same bloodline born in Cambodia. The relatively liberal definition of eligibility based on location of birth rather than ethnicity caused an outcry from Cambodians of all political stripes. It enfranchised an undetermined number of ethnic Vietnamese and raised the specter of a cunning plot by Vietnam to control the election.

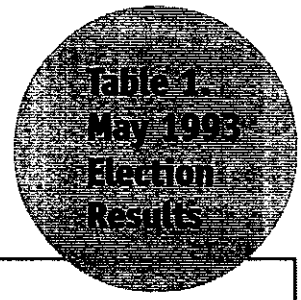
Despite these objections, UNTAC's voter registration effort was a resounding technical success. In all, 4,623,000 voters—95 percent of those eligible—were finally registered, with the thumbprint and photo of each filed and computerized in UNTAC headquarters.

The electoral component staff included UN volunteers stationed down to the district level in 200 districts throughout most provinces during the registration and campaign periods. They had the mission of training Cambodian polling officials. Each province had a senior UNTAC election chief under whom were UNTAC district electoral supervisors. Between provinces, workloads of the UNTAC officials varied greatly. Kompong Cham had a population of 1,345,582 (703,000 registered voters) and 18 seats in the National Assem-

bly. In Mondulkiri the population was only 21,449 (13,518 registered voters) with one seat at stake.

More than 1,400 fixed polling places were established. There were also a number of mobile polling stations to accommodate people in remote areas. Polls were staffed by 50,000 Cambodians trained by UNTAC's electoral component and supervised by UNTAC personnel. In addition, a thousand international polling station officers were brought in for two weeks to lend authority to the process. Care had been taken to ensure the secrecy of the individual voter's ballot, a critical aspect of the entire process. Voting, as mentioned, was by party slate. The name and symbol (such as palm tree, portrait, plow) of each slate were printed on the ballot. Voters simply checked the box next to the party symbol. Ballots from a given village were commingled with ballots from other villages at the province level to disguise how small localities voted and minimize reprisals. Counting was done at the province center. Results were then sent to Phnom Penh along with the sealed ballot boxes. Rival parties could challenge the validity of a voter's ballot on various grounds at the polling place. When that happened, the ballot became "tendered," and election personnel followed a procedure for verification of voter credentials through registration records.

The electoral component provided extensive educational programs for party officials, party members, and the general population on a wide range of subjects. The secret ballot was an important principle to ensure a "free and fair" election. Voter education accelerated in the month before the election. Despite rumors about special satellites that could peer down and see for whom one voted, or magic pens linked to computers, the concept of secret ballots was conveyed effectively to the populace. Foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) carried out democracy training programs at the province and district level to sensitize party cadres to principles of democratic campaigning and election conduct.



Party	Number of Seats	Percentage of Valid Votes Cast
National Front (Funcinpec)	58	45.5
Cambodian People's Party (CPP)	51	38.2
Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP)	10	3.8
National Liberation Movement of Cambodia (Molinaka) Party	1	1.4
17 other parties	—	11.1

Sources: Phnom Penh Post, 18 June–1 July 1993; *United Nations Focus:* "Cambodia Election Results," July 1993.

More than 89 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. They braved sporadic shelling, long walks, mine threats, and torrential downpours.

More than 89 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. They braved sporadic shelling, long walks, mine threats, and torrential downpours, demonstrating faith in the importance of their individual ballots. The presence of foreigners, many of whom had election experience in their own countries or in other UN-sponsored elections, assisted Cambodian officials and lent credibility to the process.

The results came as a shock to the incumbent Cambodian People's Party. With a total of 38.2 percent of the vote and 51 seats in the National Assembly, the CPP came in second to Funcinpec's 45.5 percent of the vote and 58 seats. The Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party received 10 seats, and the pro-Sihanoukist National Liberation Movement of Cambodia (Molinaka) Party, 1. The results created yet another round of difficulties: bitter objections from the CPP about alleged UNTAC-inspired election fraud, a Sihanouk bid for the presidency, and a failed secessionist gambit.

As it saw the tide turning, the CPP, which had expected to win, scrambled for a strategy. Officials of the party and of the State of Cambodia criticized UNTAC procedures. They pointed to defective seals on ballot boxes, ineffective indelible ink to prevent double voting, and the province counting process itself. By day three of the voting (May 25) the CPP recognized that Funcinpec was running ahead and that the BLDP would also gain a sizable vote.

UNTAC posted the daily vote count province by province and refused the CPP's demands that this practice be stopped.* The CPP consequently withdrew its poll-watchers in the provinces and began a campaign to discredit the election process. It charged fraud, maladministration of voting procedures, and UNTAC bias in favor of the noncommunist parties. Party leaders demanded that UNTAC repeat the election in seven closely contested provinces. But the party could produce little evidence of irregularities, and UNTAC refused.

To the consternation of the international community, Sihanouk announced on June 3, 1993, that he had formed a new government made up of all factions, including the Khmer Rouge, and that he was assuming all executive powers. The United States, China, Australia, and Britain refused to endorse this move, which was in direct contravention of the entire Paris peace process.

On June 10, a dissident group led by Prince Norodom Chakropong (Norodom Ranariddh's half-brother) announced that eight eastern provinces bordering Vietnam would secede from the country. Funcinpec offices in several of these provinces were burned and party personnel assaulted. In retrospect, it is apparent that the secession was a ploy by Hun Sen to force Ranariddh into power-sharing between Funcinpec and the

*UNTAC's election experts were well aware of the utility of a "quick count" to forestall manipulation of the final count by a central authority. For example, a quick count had been used in the 1986 Philippines election, which resulted in the defeat of then-president Ferdinand Marcos.

CPP. The CPP was the instigator of this bald power play to negate the elections and usurp political control. Sihanouk may have been complicit at some point.

The gambit collapsed under the weight of general disapproval from UNTAC and the rest of the international community. On June 15 the leaders of the secessionist movement fled to Vietnam. It took strong pressure from the five permanent members of the Security Council and UNTAC itself to thwart the rogue effort, which threatened to return Cambodia to civil war.

The old regime still controlled the military, the police, and the civilian administration, and the CPP gained more positions in the interim government (formed in the summer of 1993) than were merited by the election. The reality was that Funcinpec had little choice but to acquiesce. The CPP was determined not to surrender power, power that Funcinpec was not in a position to accept. If the CPP had won, Funcinpec and the smaller parties would have contested and might even have started civil war anew; if Funcinpec had won outright the two-thirds majority, the regime would probably not have turned over control, nor would Funcinpec have had sufficient cadres with government experience to hold the reins of power.

In a report of June 10, 1993, the UN special representative declared the "freeness and fairness of the Cambodian elections." He rejected complaints from the CPP about fraud and impartiality and stated the Cambodian parties must accept and respect the elections results. He did, however, admit that the political environment had not been neutral and that the human rights situation before the poll was appalling.

Why the Khmer Rouge did not do more to disrupt the election remains an intriguing question. One view is that the leadership of the Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK) was disunited, or confused, and that the Khmer Rouge military commanders were granted discretion (or took it upon themselves) to act as they thought appropriate under local conditions. In August 1996 accounts surfaced of a severe rift between Ieng Sary, one of the founders of the Khmer Rouge, and military chief Ta Mok (and Pol Pot, if he is still alive). The revelations lend credence to the theory that a fundamental disagreement over Khmer Rouge strategy produced the ambiguous position the movement assumed during the UNTAC election.

Or perhaps the PDK deliberately instructed people under its influence to vote for Funcinpec as part of a countrywide deal with Ranariddh to defeat Hun Sen and the CPP. In a few PDK-controlled areas, such as Battambang where about 30,000 returnees from Thailand had resettled with the Khmer Rouge, people actually were allowed to leave their villages to vote. Another view is that the PDK was instructed to disrupt the election by force but that local commanders, sensing a backlash from the citizenry, refused to carry out the order. In the end, the PDK's official posture was that Cambodians should boycott the "illegal" election, and it seemed likely that some of the 11 percent of registered voters who did not vote may have honored these instructions.

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CONSEQUENCES FOR DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, AND RECONCILIATION

The Paris Agreements and their underpinning assumptions imposed severe limits on the Cambodia peace process. The agreements had helped the external powers, especially the five permanent Security Council members, reduce the volatility of the Cambodia problem regionally and improve their bilateral relationships in a broader context. In this sense, the agreements were a clear success. The external powers turned a collective blind eye to several of the Cambodia problem's most intractable aspects. They judged that these problems could not be resolved at a UN conference table and perhaps rationalized that Cambodians were as much to blame for the tragic mess as outsiders. It is arguable that, pragmatically, the agreements may have been the least disadvantageous compromise under the international political conditions prevailing in 1991.

By agreeing to elections, the Khmer Rouge were placed in a no-win situation.

The question of how to handle the Khmer Rouge was blurred by the concept of "comprehensiveness." The positions of China, which demanded inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in a political settlement, and of the United States, which would not break with China on this key issue, probably made "comprehensiveness" imperative. By agreeing to elections, the Khmer Rouge were placed in a no-win situation. If they took part, they would commit political suicide. If they did not take part, they would become outlaws whom the new government could eventually wear down and destroy.

The Paris Agreements placed a huge bet on the impact of the electoral process as a legitimizing mechanism. It was assumed, somewhat blithely, that international bilateral and multilateral economic assistance and NGO programs for social change would follow legitimation and promote reconciliation between the CPP and the noncommunists. As of 1997, this reconciliation is far from complete.

In one sense, the Cambodian People's Party and the Khmer Rouge, the more powerful Cambodian signatories, saw the agreements as concessions to placate their external patrons rather than as binding contracts to be honored in practice. In Cambodia's political culture over the centuries, no tradition of compromise or reconciliation has existed between mortal enemies. The Cambodian People's Party in Phnom Penh and the Khmer Rouge in their guerrilla base areas hoped they could turn specific provisions of the agreements to their advantage and ignore other provisions. For the noncommunist groups, the agreements were a perilous stride into the unknown. The noncommunists were weaker militarily and lacked a dedicated countrywide cadre system. Their survival depended on resources from expatriate Cambodians, on the promise of international economic aid after elections, and on Sihanouk's broad popular appeal.

Thus from the outset the realities of Cambodian political culture made genuine national reconciliation extremely problematic. The agreements were *not* an open invitation to the Khmer Rouge to return to power (as some critics charged). But the "comprehensiveness" imposed by the five permanent Security Council members surely carried the danger that the organization, presumed discipline, and determination of the Khmer Rouge might allow it to assume power again. It was a chance the United Nations chose to take. Perhaps it was the only reasonable chance.

After 1989, with the Cold War fading, the international community sought to wind down the conflict in a manner that satisfied Cambodia's immediate neighbors, that gave all political groups a chance at power-sharing, and that legitimized the new government through free, fair, and open elections under international supervision. The requirements for "liberal democracy and pluralism" were spelled out in both the Paris Agreements and the Cambodian constitution promulgated in September 1993, as were provisions for future elections. All other aspects of the Paris Agreements and the immense UNTAC effort were subordinate to the central objective of achieving a legitimized government through elections. In the final analysis, the United Nations may have legitimized the *process* of selection more than the government that was eventually hammered out in 1993 on the anvil of power politics.

The Cambodian People's Party began its drive for political supremacy soon after the national elections. In the summer of 1993, Funcinpec and the CPP would join in a provisional interim government, and the newly elected Cambodian politicians would write a new constitution. This process, together with the divvying up of ministerial posts and governorships, became a test of the uneasy "reconciliation" between the CPP and its noncommunist competitors.

The election results forced the parties to make a coalition government work in order to ensure their own survival. The implicit quid pro quo of the Paris Agreements had been that the incumbent CPP would have a fair shot at political dominance if it would go along with the rules of the game for the life of UNTAC and through the initial election period. The regime and the CPP bought the deal; that they did not cooperate fully in allowing a level playing field ("neutral political environment") was shunted aside when Funcinpec won its surprise victory.

The Cambodian People's Party had expected to win that election by a clear majority. Similarly, UNTAC and the rest of the international community expected the CPP would win a majority of seats in the National Assembly. They expected further that Hun Sen (the CPP's leader and the prime minister of the regimes named, successively, People's Republic of Kampuchea and State of Cambodia) would become head of government.

The Cambodian people decided differently. That the Cambodian People's Party lost the election, and Hun Sen was obliged to become second prime minister to Funcinpec's Norodom Ranarridh has shaped the course of Cambodian politics ever since. By 1996 it was clear that the CPP intended to cement its grip on political power by winning the 1998

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What consequences did the UN peace process have for Cambodia's prospects for democratic governance?

elections and then exercise that power with minimal interference from Funcinpec and whatever other parties remain in the field.

What consequences did the UN peace process have for Cambodia's prospects for democratic governance? About the future political system, the Paris Agreements said only that Cambodia "will follow a system of liberal democracy, on the basis of pluralism," with provisions for periodic elections and universal suffrage. The agreements also prescribed that groups will have the opportunity to organize and participate in elections.

Unfortunately, the dual prime minister arrangement was tailored to conform to the personalities of Ranariddh and Hun Sen and the demands of the Funcinpec–CPP balance of power. This arrangement promoted long-term political instability. Under the constitution, the nagging question of royal succession was finessed by stipulating that a five-member throne council drawn from the National Assembly would select a new king in the event of the monarch's death. Given Sihanouk's frail health, the uncertainty of the succession is another potentially destabilizing factor.

Consequently, the pluralist political system and representative government codified in the 1993 constitution were not flourishing in July 1997, four years after Cambodia's first genuine national elections. In 1993 the National Assembly had been seen by many observers as the fundament of a nascent civil society. By 1997 it had been rendered all but powerless by a variety of factors: the CPP's dual tactic of intimidation and financial cooption of Assembly members, defections from Funcinpec, Ranariddh's weak leadership, venality and corruption by both Funcinpec and the CPP, and the slowness with which the Assembly has developed strength as an institution (perhaps not surprising, given the above).

The Cambodian People's Party under Hun Sen increasingly dominated the coalition with Funcinpec. The CPP itself was far from united, and Hun Sen, with some justification, remained fearful of plots to unseat him. Funcinpec was splintered by criticism of Ranariddh and weakened by the controversial expulsion of former finance minister Sam Rainsy.

In October 1995, Funcinpec's secretary general (and Cambodia's foreign minister), Prince Norodom Sirivudh, was accused of a plot to assassinate Hun Sen. He was then jailed and driven into exile—despite the fact that Sirivudh is the half-brother of King Norodom Sihanouk. Sam Rainsy was allowed to return to Cambodia. He remained a vocal critic of the new Royal Cambodian Government, but his efforts to organize the Khmer Nation Party were hampered at every turn. The Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party, often allied with Funcinpec in the Assembly, also suffered leadership splits. Some members defected to the CPP, joined Funcinpec, or went over to Sam Rainsy.

Coalition power-sharing was reflected in the original allocation of provincial governor and deputy positions so that Funcinpec officials could work in tandem with CPP appointees. Notwithstanding, these arrangements did not result in any real power transfer to Funcinpec. Besides its continued control of the

provincial government machinery, the Cambodian People's Party remained the only political organization with significant structure and cadres throughout the country. Whereas village chiefs used to be selected by the villagers themselves, the CPP installed the practice of appointing chiefs from above, another factor that has constrained the activities of Funcinpec and the Khmer Nation Party, which had grave difficulties in establishing their presence.

In Cambodia, organizations associated with the Buddhist church (and for the Cham population, Muslim organizations) had for centuries played important social roles in daily life, especially in the countryside. But with the exception of a handful of organizations such as the Red Cross, Cambodians were not familiar with nongovernmental civil organizations, or even their concept, when UNTAC arrived. The Paris Agreements sparked interest in human rights, democratization, political pluralism, and other concepts of popular participation in the governance process. One of UNTAC's significant contributions was to provide an incubator for the creation of dozens of indigenous NGOs in Cambodia, many of which still operated in 1997. Two were especially important for the 1998 elections: the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and the Committee for Free Elections. Until July 1997, both were engaged in various preelection citizen and party education and mobilization.

The Coup of '97

On July 5, 1997, the CPP initiated a series of events that either killed or drove into exile the political leadership and senior cadres of Funcinpec and the Khmer Nation Party. First prime minister Ranariddh and his family fled to Bangkok and thence to France. After sharp firefights and artillery exchanges in several parts of the capital city, Funcinpec's military commanders and most of their units in the Phnom Penh area were destroyed or forced to flee. A few military commanders defected and in several provinces units identified with Funcinpec were disarmed or persuaded to defect. The CPP sought out and either arrested or executed most of the opposition's most prominent figures. About 20 Funcinpec and BLDP members of the National Assembly and hundreds of their followers managed to flee to Thailand. Although some of Funcinpec's military forces still clung to positions along the Thai border in Siem Reap province, by August Hun Sen had consolidated control of the government in his own hands and the CPP had in effect seized total power. As of September 1997, some 20,000 refugees from the northern provinces were housed in camps across the Thai border.

The coup came as no surprise to most observers who had been following Cambodian affairs since the 1993 elections and the formation of the precarious coalition government that emerged from it. The timing and tactics of the coup may have been uncertain, and the brutality with which it was carried out, and its totality, were perhaps unexpected. And, yes, in the year or two after the elections there seemed to be grounds for believing that the precepts of the 1991 Paris Agreements might be adequately honored by the coalition's two major parties.

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Signals pointing to a meltdown of the coalition government had been evident since the summer of 1996.

Nevertheless, most Cambodia watchers recognized Hun Sen's seemingly manic compulsion to power. Signals pointing to a meltdown of the coalition government had been evident since the summer of 1996, when splits in the Khmer Rouge's leadership appeared and its military and political cadres began to fragment. The consequent competition between Funcinpec and the CPP for the allegiance of defecting Khmer Rouge leaders and the units they commanded was but one element in the deterioration of cooperation between the coalition parties and in the personal relationship between the two prime ministers.

The increasingly overbearing attitude of the CPP was another source of tension. Intimidation of the opposition media, the hounding of Foreign Minister Sirivudh and Finance Minister Rainsy out of their jobs (including withdrawal of their parliamentary immunity) and then out of the country, and a general worsening of the human rights picture—all were bad omens. In late 1995 the headquarters of the BLDP was attacked by a CPP-inspired grenade-throwing gang. In October 1996, Funcinpec itself was ruptured when eight members of parliament rejected Ranariddh's leadership and set up a rival faction under Foreign Minister Ung Huot, whom Hun Sen subsequently appointed as first prime minister. The BLDP subsequently split, with one faction aligning itself with the CPP. On March 30, 1997, a Khmer Nation Party rally in front of the National Assembly building was grenaded. Nineteen people were killed, and Sam Rainsy barely escaped with his life.

From March 1997 on, cooperation between the coalition partners all but ceased. Hun Sen's verbal assaults on Funcinpec and Ranariddh personally (and also against the United States and other foreign countries that incurred the second prime minister's displeasure) became progressively more strident. The National Assembly, which many involved in the UN effort had hoped would promote political toleration and respect for the rule of law, was rendered impotent and became (with the exception of a few brave souls) a rubber stamp for the CPP. The coalition government was in effect dead. After March 1997, even the most optimistic analysts saw little chance for political reconciliation. They assumed that, probably sooner than later, violence again would shape the future politics of the country. This was the situation in July 1997.

Some analysts argued that Ranariddh's negotiations with the hardcore Khmer Rouge faction near the northern border town Anlong Veng in June and July 1997 gave Hun Sen a rationale for a preemptive strike. This view is questionable, given the crispness with which the coup and its subsequent roundup of CPP enemies were carried out. Everything indicated meticulous planning and careful allocation of security resources. Although Ranariddh's judgment can be questioned on the practical utility of his negotiations, given the implacable hostility between Hun Sen and the Anlong Veng faction, Hun Sen was just as eager to take advantage of the Khmer Rouge factionalism, and indeed frequently did so during 1995 and 1996. (The CPP's co-option of

the Ieng Sary faction in western Cambodia is a case in point.) Ranariddh's leadership of Funcinpec was often inept and corrupt. But these failings did not justify the trashing of the Paris Agreements and the grievous damage to the country's tentative steps toward reconciliation, participatory governance, and the rule of law.

As of mid-September 1997, Hun Sen continued to consolidate his power within Cambodia. Externally, however, his regime has had several setbacks. First Prime Minister Ranariddh has led a worldwide campaign to annul the July coup. He has been joined by Sam Rainsy and Son Soubert under the banner of the Union of Democratic Cambodia. How to reintegrate the exiled leaders of Funcinpec, the BLDP, and the Khmer Nation Party into the Cambodian political system remains one of the key issues to be resolved.

At its August meeting, Asean, while ushering in Laos and Myanmar, declined to accept Cambodia as the 10th member of the group. At the United Nations, the credentials committee rejected the applications of both Ranariddh's group and the delegation nominated by King Sihanouk. It preferred instead to leave the Cambodia seat vacant in the General Assembly. With the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank debating their next moves, the financial situation of the Phnom Penh government was becoming precarious. In sum, as of late October 1997, the final act of the Cambodia tragedy has yet to be played out.

STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL LESSONS

UNTAC had a broad mandate and the power of intrusion into Cambodia's sovereignty. In its scale, cost, and duration, it was without precedent in international peacekeeping. It is hard to imagine the UN today undertaking a peace mission of similar proportions. Despite the 1997 coup and the political disruption that has ensued, there are some lessons to be learned (or relearned) regarding peacekeeping and nation-building in postconflict societies.

The importance of "stability." The UN peace process in Cambodia began in the mid-1980s when the Cold War still dominated global politics. Today's environment is quite different. Cambodia's chance for peace came because the external powers found it in their own national interests to settle their accounts through compromise rather than continued fighting—the game was no longer worth the candle. Today, stability (however defined) in Cambodia is the common denominator of all the external powers, including the United States. That reality must temper concerns about human rights and democratization with pragmatic recognition of the realities of Cambodian's autarkic political tendencies. For Asean the cardinal rule has been noninterference in the internal affairs of member states. Nonetheless, Asean, immediately after the coup, postponed Cambodia's entry and is engaged in a process that will attempt to restore at least a semblance of the intent of the massive UN effort.

The final act of the Cambodia tragedy has yet to be played out.

Lesson: One person's bondage is another person's stability. Although Hun Sen's precipitate grab for power has complicated Asean's decision, when Cambodia enters the organization sometime in the future, there will be less concern about the nature of the regime than about its potential to disrupt regional stability.

The necessity of rapid deployment and implementation. The United Nations understood that a quick start to implementation was imperative to prevent deterioration of the military and political situation, yet the installation of UNTAC followed a leisurely pace. The long gap between the signing of the Paris Agreements and activation of UNTAC resulted in the Khmer Rouge reappraising their agreement. They decided not to honor most of the key provisions (cantonment, access to their zone, participation in the election) and in effect to resist UNTAC's presence. Likewise, the State of Cambodia regime had time to reflect and decide against full compliance on other important provisions (neutral political environment, access to the five key ministries).

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A vigorous, fully staffed UNTAC presence in December 1991 might have headed off this evolution of events. The fault here lies clearly with UN headquarters in New York, not only the decision-making process but also the inefficient nature of the UN bureaucracy.

Lesson: Once agreement on paper is reached, it must be confirmed rapidly and with vigor on the ground. And as the 1997 coup has shown, even then the peace may disintegrate over time.

Reforming the UN administrative culture. The United Nations' cumbersome administrative apparatus and ingrained bureaucratic procedures compounded the difficulty of getting UNTAC operational. Many UNTAC functions had to be administered either through the weak local administration (in which most functionaries spoke only Khmer) or through a makeshift temporary governance structure hastily set up by a small army of civil and military administrators and technicians who knew little or nothing about the society into which they were parachuted. Although English and French were UNTAC's official languages, dozens of other tongues were spoken by UNTAC's diverse contingents. The United Nations had difficulty recruiting suitable personnel for this complex nation-building, particularly in middle and senior management positions.

Nowhere was this weakness more brazenly evident than in UNTAC's civilian police component, the largest single civilian element of the UN effort and by all accounts its most ineffective. This component was late deploying, and with the exception of one or two provinces it did little to protect indigenous human rights or ensure a neutral political environment. This failure was due in large measure to the inherent difficulty of the United Nations' having to recruit its law-enforcement personnel from the local constabularies of member nations with vastly different cultural backgrounds and legal systems.

Lesson: In a new peacekeeping era, the international community needs to rethink how future civilian police missions are to be accomplished (perhaps through a career

international civilian police force) and to commit the necessary resources.

Pinning down the details. Genuine participation of the Khmer Rouge was from the outset problematic. Other elements of the agreements that were ambiguous or unresolved at the time of signing in October 1991 ignited periodically into brushfires that seemed to threaten the UN peacekeeping process. But the critical issues were the intentions of the Khmer Rouge regarding participation in the electoral process and their ability to disrupt the elections.

As they found UNTAC unprepared, step by step, to use force, the KR continued to resist access. This UNTAC failing can be attributed in part to an absence of political will at UN Headquarters. It reflects in particular the attitude of the five permanent Security Council members, who were not inclined to risk a shooting war. The UN senior representative, Yasushi Akashi, understood the New York perspective and was intent on keeping the door open to participation by the Khmer Rouge's Party of Democratic Kampuchea in the elections, even at the last moment. The party continued to press and expand its complaint in rationalizing nonparticipation, thereby manipulating UNTAC's agenda.

In May 1992, the PDK opposed the UN secretary general's appeal for $600 million to rehabilitate the country, claiming it would be directed toward supporting the administrative structure of the rival Cambodian People's Party. The PDK refused to allow UNTAC officials to look at its financial ledgers. Since the PDK refused to cooperate with UNTAC, any possibility for the faction to receive a portion of the forthcoming aid was eliminated. Nonetheless, the question of the CPP gaining an electoral advantage through rehabilitation projects gave UNTAC pause and, in effect, all but halted rehabilitation during its tenure. That deepened Cambodia's impoverishment.

The final irony: The event that precipitated the 1997 coup may have been Ranariddh's negotiations with the hardcore remnants of the Khmer Rouge. These were the very leaders who made the key decisions in 1992 regarding the Party of Democratic Kampuchea's nonparticipation in the UN peace process. One could well argue that Pol Pot, never willing to compromise, in the end managed to postpone indefinitely, if not destroy, Cambodia's hope for national reconciliation.

Lesson: When the international community concludes a peace agreement involving long-time enemies, details of implementation must be pinned down and enforcement mechanisms put firmly in place. And they must be kept in place.

Coping with a broken cease-fire. The cease-fire was violated by all the factions throughout the transition period, but most often and most seriously by the Khmer Rouge and the armed forces of the State of Cambodia. Duplicity and accusations were common from both sides, but by any measure the PDK's armed forces were responsible for most violations. Yet the armed conflicts that sprang up were not so flagrant as the worst-case scenarios predicted before UNTAC's arrival, and they did not prevent the election from going

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forward. The UNTAC operation fell under chapter VI of the UN charter (the military forces were neutral and could fire only in self-defense), rather than chapter VII (force can be used to apply the UN mandate to uncooperative parties). Senior Representative Akashi played a weak hand about as well as he could.

Lesson: First, only a peacekeeping force with strong and obvious military capabilities can in fact keep the peace. Second, peacekeeping forces cannot stay forever (Bosnia could test that rule).

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Failure of sequenced phasing. UNTAC's mission was to be implemented in carefully sequenced phases. Phase II was not to begin until all aspects of phase I had been completed. This elaborate phasing never came to pass, in part because of UNTAC's delayed deployment. The many violations of the Paris Agreements prohibited the planned flow of phases and came close to destroying the entire UN effort.

Yet, had the phases actually been carried out as planned, the UNTAC military component would, in all probability, have been far smaller by the time elections came about in May 1993. Consequently, the heavy logistical task of distributing and collecting ballot boxes and a mass of other election equipment (not to mention transporting thousands of foreign election officials and observers) could never have been handled so expeditiously. There would, moreover, have been far fewer troops in the distant provinces to provide election security. Thus, while the Paris Agreements' presumptions of genuine national reconciliation may have been badly flawed, one result was the continued full presence of UNTAC's military forces, without which the national election might not have come off at all.

Lesson: A strict timetable for the deployment of peacekeeping forces, demilitarization, reintegration, and elections may not be feasible.

Persistence of zero-sum politics. Can participatory governance be forced down the throat of a society with no experience in political toleration? Under UNTAC, Cambodia's political actors competed for power under rules that turned traditional Cambodian culture on its head. The concept of a "loyal opposition" is foreign to most Cambodians, as is the concept of participatory governance. Politics remains rooted in client–patron relationships based on money and personal security.

In Cambodia and elsewhere in postconflict societies of the developing world, politics remains largely a zero-sum game. Consequently, elections alone do not constitute the democratic process, and they certainly will *not* solve Cambodia's deep-seated sociopolitical problems, nor those of any other developing country. Elections, though, are an important step in political maturation; given the intense UNTAC experience, elections in Cambodia assume perhaps greater importance than in many similar situations around the world.

The manner in which Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party are going about preparations for the 1998 elections is the best case in point. With the genuine leaders of all opposition parties now in exile, the regime has installed replacement

leaders of Funcinpec, the Khmer Nation Party, and BLDP in Cambodia using personnel who seem likely to be compliant with the CPP's wishes.

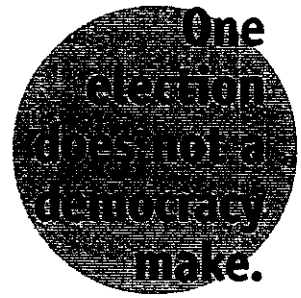
Lesson: First, one election does not a democracy make. An election in a postconflict society does not by itself ensure a peaceful, stable transition. Second, just because the prodemocracy party wins that election does not mean it will compete successfully with the losing party in the governance process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promote and support indigenous NGOs. Despite a zero-sum, politically intolerant climate, a significant number of Cambodians seemed to accept the basic concepts of the democratic process as embodied in the 1993 national elections. The surprise victory of Funcinpec demonstrated, if somewhat simplistically, the attractiveness of this process even to rural people living in rudimentary circumstances. One of the important legacies of UNTAC was the growth of Cambodian participation in human rights organizations and NGOs involved in human rights and democratization. These groups now have links with the international community. Given the poor quality and limited delivery range of the government's social services, the implementation capabilities of the NGOs have filled an important resource and communications gap.

During the 1980s, foreign NGOs were virtually the only link to international expertise and resources. After the Paris Agreements, the NGO community expanded rapidly (to more than 140), especially as bilateral donor agencies sought out accountable executing organizations with the technical and administrative talent still lacking in the relevant government departments. NGOs seeking to promote democracy, human rights, and empowerment of women have raised the consciousness of an increasing number of Cambodians, as has an informal reconciliation movement. The indigenous NGOs are fragile elements of Cambodian society, and the political elites tend to see them still as threatening, rather than positive, forces. Nonetheless, these microscopic signs of a civil society may provide a foundation on which American and other international assistance programs can build. In light of the events of July 1997, the continued existence of a vibrant NGO sector remains even more relevant.

Maintain bilateral humanitarian assistance. U.S. assistance should concentrate on supporting Cambodian nongovernmental organizations (UNTAC's most enduring legacy) and training of the government's legal system. Although the activities of human rights, democratization, and certain other NGOs will be constrained in the current environment, over the longer term the NGO sector has the capacity to survive and eventually to expand. It will be necessary for Cambodian NGOs to adopt a lower profile in program activities and to conduct planning and coordination work with discretion. The NGOs have demonstrated the ability to calibrate their policies and specific activities, most of which are basically educational in nature, in a manner that need not be deemed threatening to whatever government is in power.



International donors must maintain a blunt dialog with the government and demand creation of conditions for a fair electoral process.

Keep the pressure on. Hun Sen views the next elections as a means of conferring legitimacy and primary, if not exclusive, power on his Cambodian People's Party. The critical questions are when, under what conditions, and who will be permitted to participate. Timing has become a critical factor. A series of complicated steps must be taken to plan and execute the electoral process. The government has requested the UN to coordinate "technical assistance," but Hun Sen has rejected categorically any major foreign observer role similar to that in the 1993 election.

Since the international community provides the essential resources (half the government's annual expenditures) for Cambodia's rebirth, the question of the community's leverage on this question thus becomes central. If elections are to have a chance at being representative of the will of the Cambodian people, international donors must maintain a blunt dialog with the government and demand creation of conditions for a fair electoral process, including participation of exiled opposition leaders and close monitoring by international observers.

Support COFFEL and COMFREL. The Cambodian umbrella NGO committees COFFEL and COMFREL are expected to have significant coordinating roles in preparing for and conducting the elections. Whether they will be able to carry out this function is one of the litmus tests of the regime's commitment to free elections. The United States and other members of the international community with special capabilities in the democratic electoral process (Canada, Australia, France) should do what is possible to defend the position of these committees without jeopardizing their credibility with the government.

Ensure political participation during and after the elections. Several other issues are extremely important and must be resolved before international support for the election is confirmed. These include the status of the exiled leaders of the Union of Cambodian Democrats, some of whom remain under criminal indictment. The international community should warn the CPP against denying the exiled leadership full, safe, and legal participation in future elections.

Work with Asean. Exercising U.S. influence in the international financial institutions is of course one potentially powerful lever. Equally important over the long haul is coordination of our policy with Asean. Asean's member states are Cambodia's immediate neighbors and have the greatest vested interest in Cambodia's stability. They do not want to see Cambodia become a center for international crime syndicates or a conduit for the international narcotics trade.

Asean still intends to welcome Cambodia into its number. The United States has no choice but to work with and through Asean (as well as with Japan and the European countries) in pursuit of our Cambodia policy. American policymakers should bear in mind that although Asean was an architect of the Paris Agreements, the majority of its individual member states have little use for democratic elections or some

of the other principles embodied in the agreements.

Stay involved. It is tempting to recommend that the United States not get involved in supporting elections in a country in conflict unless a detailed and firm peace agreement has been signed by the parties, unless there are specific measures for enforcement of a cease-fire (and cantonment and disarmament), and unless there is clear evidence of genuine national reconciliation once elections have been held and the peacekeepers have departed. Such ideal situations, however, will probably never exist. UNTAC scored some successes. But Cambodia remains a conflicted society where attempts to build participatory governance and to stimulate the economic development that must underpin viable political institutions are in their infancy.

All this said, painful questions must be asked about the utility of placing such great emphasis on elections as the key to furthering the goals of democratic governance in Cambodia. To what extent can the United States expect realistically to influence laws governing the conduct of the elections and the status of the political parties? It may be possible to help exiled politicians from Funcinpec, the Khmer Nation Party, and the BLDP gain legal status in the electoral process, but how can their safety be ensured indefinitely? It may be possible to persuade Hun Sen to stand down the village militias that have the ability to coerce the electorate. And it may be possible to remove the military establishment from the electoral process. But if the election laws do not meet our criteria, should we simply declare the rules unfair and withdraw whatever financial support we may have committed, or do we wait and see how the rules are applied? If the CPP sweeps the elections under a set of rules it has created, would the United States recognize the results if other members of the international community judge that the elections have been conducted in a "free, fair, and open" manner?

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